

**Detailed Summary of Revisions To the  
Regulations Establishing Standards  
For Accrediting Public Schools in Virginia  
Adopted by the Board of Education  
July 28, 2000**

The Regulations Establishing Standards for Accrediting Public Schools in Virginia (“regulations” or “standards”) govern the purpose, philosophy, goals and objectives; academic achievement; requirements for graduation and school accountability; school leadership, staffing, and support services; facilities and student safety; school communication; and procedures for accreditation.

The regulations have been revised to clarify the requirements of the standards and to help schools continue to focus attention and place emphasis on students’ academic performance. In addition, the standards propose a system of rewards for high-performing schools, school divisions, and students. Also included are consequences, actions, and assistance for low-performing schools. During the process of revising the regulations, the Board sought flexibility and fairness yet held firm to high standards for schools and students.

The following are the major changes adopted in this revision:

1. A mechanism was established to allow tests such as Advanced Placement (AP) and International Baccalaureate (IB) to be used with Standards of Learning (SOL) tests for earning verified credits for high school graduation at a student's option. Results on these tests also would count in the school’s pass rates for accreditation purposes.
2. A transition period from 2000-01 through 2002-03 (students in grades 7, 8, and 9 in fall 2000) during which they will have to pass six SOL tests to graduate: two in English and four of their choosing. This flexibility is being allowed since these students have not had the benefit of the Standards of Learning for their entire school careers.
3. A new diploma, the Modified Standard Diploma, was created for certain students with disabilities who are unlikely to meet the requirements for a Standard Diploma but may achieve above the level of the Special Diploma.
4. A student-selected SOL test for earning a verified unit of credit may include computer science, technology, or other subjects prescribed by the Board of Education was introduced to provide an alternative to having only academic courses used for this purpose. In addition, students may earn verified credits for elective courses identified by the Board as directed by the General Assembly.
5. A student may have an opportunity for expedited retest on SOL end-of-course examinations.
6. A school may institute a remediation recovery program that has been established by the Board in English (Reading, Literature, and Research) and mathematics to allow a student who is not retained in grade and who has not previously passed the related SOL test(s) to receive additional instruction and to retake the SOL test(s).

*Regulations Establishing Standards for Accrediting Public Schools in Virginia*

7. Students in grades K-8 may participate in a remediation recovery program for English (Reading, Literature, and Research), mathematics, or both. In grades 9-12, the remediation recovery program includes opportunities to retake the end-of-course SOL mathematics tests and the eighth-grade English (Reading, Literature, and Research) and mathematics SOL tests. Schools receive "bonus points" for their pass rates when students are successful in this program.
8. The six standard units of credit, that a student must earn in elective courses for a Standard Diploma must include at least two sequential electives.
9. A student will be able to demonstrate mastery of the academic content of a course and receive the recommendation of the school division superintendent to receive a standard of unit of credit and be permitted to sit for the related SOL test to earn a verified unit of credit, without 140 clock hours of instruction.
10. New diploma seals to recognize outstanding student achievement in response to mandates of the General Assembly were created:
  - a. The *Board of Education Career and Technical Seal* would be awarded to students who demonstrate outstanding achievement in academic and career and technical studies.
  - b. The *Seal of Advanced Mathematics and Technology* will be awarded to students who demonstrate outstanding achievement in mathematics and technology.
11. A series of intermediate annual benchmarks for SOL test pass rates in the four core academic areas of English, math, science and history/social studies between 2000-01 and the end of the 2003-04 academic year that clearly define the expected progress of schools were established. These benchmarks would increase each year in a "stairstep" approach. Schools that have student pass rates at or above these annual benchmarks will be "Provisionally Accredited."
12. A new accreditation sub-category, "Provisionally Accredited/Needs Improvement", was created for schools that do not reach the annual benchmarks, but which are within 20 percentage points of the benchmarks for use between now and the end of the 2002-2003 academic year. Schools that are 20 or more percentage points below the annual benchmarks will be "Accredited with Warning in (specified academic area or areas)."
13. The third-grade science and history/social science test scores will not be used to calculate accreditation ratings during the period from 2000-01 through 2002-03. The third grade scores may be used by combining them with the fifth-grade science and history/social science scores if they will benefit the school.
14. The pass rate in third- and fifth-grade English required for schools to be rated "Fully Accredited" will be 75 percent beginning in 2003-04.
15. Schools that are "Accredited with Warning" in either English or math will be expected to adopt an instructional model or method with a documented track record of success at raising student achievement in reading or math.

*Regulations Establishing Standards for Accrediting Public Schools in Virginia*

16. An “Academic Review” of each school that is “Accredited with Warning” will be conducted by an individual or a team supervised by the Department of Education. This academic review will focus on whether the school has aligned its curriculum with the SOL, whether the daily class schedule could be restructured to devote more time to academic areas of weakness, whether student achievement data are being used effectively to target areas of weakness, and whether staff development resources are being used efficiently to improve areas of weakness. This academic review report would become a key document in both the development of the school's improvement plan and later evaluations of the school for remedial actions, should the school fail to achieve accreditation on schedule.
17. Each school “Accredited with Warning” must file an annual report with the state detailing its progress in implementing its School Improvement Plan. Together with the report of the baseline academic review, these reports will form a record of the school's improvement efforts that will be important in evaluating the school should the it fail to achieve accreditation by the end of the 2005-2006 academic year.
18. Any school that has failed to achieve accreditation under current academic standards by the end of the 2005-2006 academic year will be rated in the category of "Accreditation Denied," as in the current SOA, unless the school meets criteria to be rated "Accreditation Withheld/Improving School"--a new rating established in the revised standards. This designation is for schools that have reached the pass-rate standard in English, have at least a combined 60 percent pass rate in the other academic areas, and have increased their pass rates by at least 25 percentage points since 1998-1999 in the academic areas in which they have fallen short. Schools may retain this designation for up to three years as long as they continue to make progress in the areas short of the 70 percent pass-rate standard.
19. Beginning immediately, accreditation will be determined by using a three-year rolling average of student pass rates or the current year's scores, whichever is greater. Additionally, the scores of transfer students and students identified as Limited English Proficient (LEP) will be used in calculating of the accreditation rating of a school if those scores benefit the school.
20. Schools that achieve a pass rate above that required for fully accredited status may receive waivers from state regulations.
21. The important role of principals in the accountability process is recognized and recommendations are made to give principals the maximum amount of authority necessary to run their schools.
22. The standards state explicitly that any student who receives a Virginia high school diploma has a diploma of equal value to all other graduates, regardless of the accreditation status of his or her school. The accreditation status of the school would not be reported on student transcripts.
23. Superintendents must verify in writing by July 1 of each year that the curriculum of his or her school division has incorporated the SOL into each school's curriculum and that the SOL are being taught in the classroom to all test-eligible children.

*Regulations Establishing Standards for Accrediting Public Schools in Virginia*

A complete copy of the standards can be found on the Department's Web Site at <http://www.pen.k12.va.us>.